

Giuseppe Sarto was born on June 2, 1835 in the little Italian town of Rieseⁱ (pronounced REE ESSAY) that one might liken to a village in rural Alaska. His father Giovanni was the town's postmaster and earned his living by making shoes. Feeding the family of 10 was a fulltime job. Young Giuseppe was a bright student and was able to attend a regional high school at a time when few were able to complete their education. He never lost sight of this privilege and worked throughout his life to help others learn and to improve their knowledge of the faith.

He studied to be a priest in Padua and was ordained in 1858. In his first pastoral assignment, he organized a night school to help adults learn to read and write. Recognizing his exceptional abilities, the pastor he worked with, wrote a prophetic summary of his assistant. "They have sent me ... a young priest, with orders to mold him to the duties of pastor; in fact, however, the contrary is true. He is so zealous, so full of good sense, and other precious gifts that it is I who can learn much from him. Some day ... he will wear the [bishop's] miter, of that I am sure. After that—who knows?"ⁱⁱ

In July of 1867, Father Sarto, became the pastor of a larger parish in Salzano where he continued to show a preferential option for the poor. He was always giving food and clothing to those in need. His two sisters often complained that their brother was always giving away his own clothing to help others. He truly showed the loved God with all of his heart mind and soul by loving his neighbors and giving them the shirt off of his back time and again.

Nine years later, he was appointed to shepherd at the Cathedral. He also served as Chancellor of the diocese and Spiritual Director of the seminary. He helped to form young men with the caring heart of Jesus.

In 1884, Pope Leo XIII named him as bishop of Mantua. Nine years later, after helping to strengthen the seminary education of clergy, and raising the bar for the Christian education of the laity, the Pope appointed him the Patriarch of Venice. He continued to serve the poor, improve the education of seminarians, and teach the faith to young and old.

Upon the death of Pope Leo XIII, he was elected as the new pope over his own objections. Recalling the words of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, he whispered, "Thy will be done." Giuseppe Sarto took Pius X as his new name and was installed on August 9, 1903. Like Saint Paul, he wanted "to restore all things in Christ" (Eph 1:10).

Pius X placed an emphasis on teaching the faith as a way of combatting evil and improving society. Pius X required all priests to instruct children for an hour each Sunday on "the text of the Catechism on those things they must believe and do in order to attain salvation" (# 19). He also encouraged the laity to help teach the faith (#22).ⁱⁱⁱ By encouraging everyone to read the bible, he helped the lay faithful learn from the caring heart of Jesus.^{iv}

"Teach me your paths, my God, guide me in your truth" (Ps 25 4b, 5a). Pius was very impressed with the spiritual autobiography of Therese of Lisieux. She longed to receive Holy Communion as a child and to receive Jesus in the Eucharist as frequently as possible. Pope Pius X lowered the age of receiving First Communion to the age of reason. He encouraged the frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist by all Catholics and relaxed the fast for the sick.

The onset of World War I deeply troubled the Pope. "A little more than a month after the outbreak of the war, the Pope was seized with an attack of influenza, and his weakened constitution could not combat the illness."^v He died August 20, 1914. In his last will and testament, he wrote, "I was born poor, I lived poor, I die poor." "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"^{vi} (Mt 5:3).

ⁱ Proud of the pious young boy who grew up to be Pope, Riese is now known as Riese Pio X and the street for the post office is named Via Guiseppe Sarto.

ⁱⁱ ewtn.com/catholicism/library/saint-pius-x-pope-5771

ⁱⁱⁱ vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_15041905_acerbo-nimis

^{iv} catholicnewsagency.com/saint/pope-st-pius-x-575

^v EWTN article

^{vi} franciscanmedia.org/saint-pius-x/